

RECONCILIATION, FORGIVENESS AND VIOLENCE IN AFRICA

BIBLICAL, PASTORAL AND ETHICAL PERSPECTIVES

EDITORS

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LESSONS FROM MR. NOKI

Empire, Structural Violence and the *Missio Dei*

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INTRODUCTION: DEAD BODY WALKING

On the 16th of August 2012, 34 mineworkers were killed by police in a conflict between Lonmin's Marikana² mine management and their workforce (Botha & Forster, 2017). The leader of the striking miners, Mgecineni Noki,³ died that day after advocating for basic increases and a more dignified life. This event has been likened to the Sharpeville⁴ of the new South Africa.⁵ The situation was a boiling pot consisting of a multinational company seeking best financial return at the expense of the dignity of mine workers, radicalised unions, militarised police and the misuse of political power, which resulted in violent and blatant murder as uncovered by the Farlam Commission⁶ (Botha & Forster, 2017). What preceded this event is a clear example of structural violence,⁷ and the subsequent strike was a reaction to

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- 2 For more details on the whole Marikana tragedy, see Rehad Desai's (2014) documentary *Miners Shot Down* (86 min, color) South Africa. Viewed from <http://www.minersshotdown.co.za>. [Accessed 12 May 2018]
- 3 Although this chapter largely uses the story of Mr. Noki, he is an icon to point to all those who died during the Marikana tragedy.
- 4 For more information on this, please see Mia Swart and Ylva Rodny. Rodny-Gumede (2015). Introduction: Considering the aftermath of Marikana. *Social Dynamics*, 41(2):323-326. Viewed from https://www.academia.edu/19802896/Introduction_considering_the_aftermath_of_Marikana [Accessed 12 May 2018].
- 5 For a more nuanced perspective of different political role players and their reactions towards the Marikana massacre, see 'Marikana shooting "like Sharpeville"', News24, 17 August 2012, viewed from <http://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/Marikana-shooting-like-Sharpeville-20120817> [Accessed 13 May 2018].
- 6 It is officially named the Marikana Commission. Please see <https://www.sahrc.org.za/home/21/files/marikana-report-1.pdf> for the full report titled: Marikana Commission of Inquiry: Report on Matters Of Public, National And International Concern Arising out of the Tragic Incidents at The Lonmin Mine in Marikana, in The North West Province. The report was compiled by the Farlam Commission under judge Ian Farlam. [Accessed 19 August 2019].
- 7 The term "structural violence" in this chapter relies heavily on the work done by John Galtung, but should be understood as distinct from "cultural violence", also defined by Galtung in his later work.

this manifestation of violence. Mgecineni Noki's life of struggle and his inhumane death have come to serve as a symbol for all those who have lost their lives in such conflicts, as well as those who are still held captive by an unjust social, political and economic system. This chapter does not aim to go into detail about Mr. Noki's life, but use his social location as a lens to critique church⁸ engagement in issues of violence that undermine the dignity of the most vulnerable peoples.

STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE

It is not Mr. Noki's death that is the guiding factor of this chapter, but his life. In the months prior to the Marikana incident, workers of Lonmin were participating in a strike for better living conditions and improved salaries. At the centre of this strike was a call for dignity, a life of enough food, job security and liberation from inhumane living conditions. This is evident in the pleas for a raise in income as pursued by the workforce of Lonmin. Investigations into the life of Mr. Noki and his colleagues reveal that miners had to make due with a salary of about R4000 per month sending most the income home to family. This was often not enough to support a whole family forcing individuals to lend money from short term lenders, sometimes with an interest rate of 50% per month (Davies, 2015).

At the core of this is what social theorists call structural violence. In Johan Galtung's 1969 article⁹ 'Violence, Peace and Peace Research', Galtung creates a distinction between personal or physical violence and what he calls structural violence.¹⁰ This notion of structural violence, which precedes the physical violence endured by Mr. Noki and his fellow workers, is argued here to be distinct but connected. Furthermore, Galtung names structural violence not as 'exploitation' but explicitly as a form of violence and a profound injustice (1969:171). This injustice is rooted in a lived experience of being denied certain rights such as a dignified living quarters and a just wage, but also denial of access to fair representation and, in the case of Marikana, access to dignity. Galtung's argument rests on his definition of violence being the difference between actual outcome and potential outcome. He goes further to explain that violence is contextual and time bound. Using an example of a child dying from tuberculosis, Galtung (1969:168) explains that this would never be understood as violent in the 18th century. Yet, when the same event occurs in a 21st century context where the prevention and cure of certain strands of tuberculosis is possible, the event of a child's death is considered violent. Therefore, when the potential to avoid personal or societal pain or bodily harm is present, but the outcome is not the realisation of this avoidance, violence is present (Galtung, 1969:169). Galtung takes this understanding of violence even further and distinguishes between violence directly caused by a person and violence indirectly

8 "Church" in this chapter refers to the ecclesial structures in South Africa. The term is therefore used in a theological way and not linked to specific denominations or congregations unless otherwise specified.

9 See J. Galtung. (1969). Violence, peace, and peace research. *Journal of Peace Research*, 6(3):167-191.

10 Important to note is that this chapter refers to 'structural violence'. Other writers such as Gutiérrez use the term 'institutional violence,' which is indistinguishable from the term structural violence.

caused by a person or persons as part of a structure¹¹ (1969:171). Here the face of violence is expressed not necessarily with instantaneous bodily effect on the human, but is absorbed into the structure which then is presented as, for example, the just distribution of resources. Most importantly, Galtung (1969:171) defines this form of structural violence as the power to influence the distribution of life-giving resources resulting in it being unequally distributed. Within this understanding, the situation at Marikana was violent before the first shots were fired. The power dynamic present at the Lonmin mine, which equated to a small number of privileged employees having the power¹² to exclude workers from certain resources to advance dignity, is in this argument considered structural violence. Noting the above, any form of reactionary violence from the workforce against this structural violence, is just that – reactionary and not primary violence, as one might believe.

Crucial to this understanding of violence is its unseen nature. This form of violence is largely invisible and therefore difficult to expose and report on. What is easier, is to expose and report on is physical violence, thus inadvertently labelling the victims of structural violence as the primary violent oppressors to which the ‘structures’ must react. One can therefore discern between a primary and silent lingering forms of violence perpetuated by institutions, cultures or people groups, which then is reacted upon with visible protest, which sometimes result in physical violence to people or infrastructure. This one might call reactionary violence. The argument by Galtung does not condone reactionary violence but merely tries to define more pervasive and silent forms of violence not experienced by the powerful or privileged in society. This reactionary violence seen in protests must therefore be understood as a means of communicating ‘last resort’ rather than destruction for the sake of destruction.

Theologically this takes form in the denial of a person being made in the *imago Dei* (Wolterstorff, 1983:78-79). A person or group of people on the receiving end of unseen (structural violence) might still live a physically healthy life, but with deep wounds carved in the image of God residing in them. Liberation theologian Gustavo Gutiérrez approaches the problem of structural violence from a theological perspective, stating that this form of violence is violent because it is violent to the truth of the Peace of the Lord (2014:64). This understanding frames structural violence not only as violence against the *imago Dei*, but against the body of Christ and its Mission of Peace. Walter Wink (1992:13-31) argues that the notion of ‘redemptive violence’ is a myth embodied in postmodern society, which underscores violence as an act of liberation or even national pride. Violence, therefore, not only chains the most vulnerable to suffering, but also chains the powerful to oppression. Albert Nolan

- 11 Gil Bailie (1995:55-57) notes an important trajectory in the conversation regarding violence. Bailie argues that (at least in the United States) there is a tendency for the political right to focus on physical violence whilst the political left tends to focus on structural violence. This contribution does not aim to underline structural violence above Physical Violence, but rather to help understand the causes of unseen violence precisely because it is unseen. Furthermore, this contribution is heavily influenced by Walter Wink’s work which condemns any form of violence whether seen or unseen.
- 12 Rodney Tshaka (in Welker et al. 2017:197-200) does well to problematise colonial influence, power dynamics and black theology within the context of the events at Marikana.

(1988:83), writing on the South African context of violence in the 1980's, notes how a culture of violence has made violence a virtue, for example, being a soldier or part of the security force was culturally understood as honourable. This then also scars the *imago Dei* and forms humanity into something that believes violent dominion over humanity is not only needed, but virtuous. The notion of a sacred image of God is clear in the work of Beverly Mitchell (2009:27) writing on the experiences of Jews in Nazi concentration camps where victims were denied adequate latrines:

The human body, originally designed by the Divine, to convey sublime beauty, was now the source of stench and visible filth that assaulted the senses.

The idea of a living being denied a right is for Galtung (1969:175) directly linked to dynamics of power. This unequal access and rights is upheld by notions of power, which are entrenched in society on a cultural, economic and political level (Roberts, 1987:85). Juliana Claassens (2016:103), in an important work of feminism and dignity, shows how poverty¹³ can be understood as a direct effect of structural violence and embedded in power. Claassens (2016:103) is influenced by the work of Paul Farmer (in Saussy, 2010:344) who argues that the effects of structural violence on vulnerable peoples are that these people are more likely to suffer because of structural violence, and their suffering is more likely not to be heard. According to Claassens, "systematic reasons" can be given to why so many in this world suffer, and that reason is a systemic and violent system working only to advance the needs of a selected social group, i.e. those with access to power.

In the life of Mr Noki, this is underlined by the truth of his life narrative. His father had died before his birth as a result of Tuberculosis which he contracted at Impala Platinum Mine just 50km from Marikana (Davies, 2015). Both men, father and son, were on the receiving end of structural violence and might explain Mr Noki's drive to advocate for more just wages and living conditions. Access to dignified living escaped both father and son and their inability to access power, hampered access to dignity. This notion of power and its influence on human beings is what Beverly Mitchell (2009:11) understands as the root cause of violence to human dignity.

The absence of empathetic imagination, the inability to see members of the "paraiah" group as being like one's self is the psychological foundation for participating in dehumanising a fellow human being.

Social science, as in the work of Galtung, have contributed enormously to the understanding and deconstruction of social power dynamics. The notion of power embedded in social structures for the benefit of a few is not new in theology. What follows is an attempt to relate some of the work done by the social sciences, to specific strands of theological thinking in order to frame a theological understanding of structural violence and the church's challenge to such dehumanising actions.

13 When using the notion of poverty to explain 'structural violence', I do not want to negate the other forms of structural violence experienced by, for example, woman or persons with LBGITQA+ identities. These individuals are equally victims of structural violence and therefore the term should not be understood as only relevant to notions of financial exclusion.

EMPIRE AS THE FATHER OF STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE

Following the Accra sitting of the General Council of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches in 2004, work was done by a group of theologians to unpack the challenge of the Accra confession for church communities. In this work, titled *Dreaming of a Different World*, a statement is made to clarify the theological understanding of empire (Boesak, Weusmann and Amjad-Ali (eds.) 2010:2).

We speak of empire, because we discern a coming together of economical, cultural, political and military power in our world today. This is constituted by a reality and a spirit of lordless domination, created by humankind. An all-encompassing global reality serving, protecting and defending the interests of powerful corporations, nations, elites and privileged people, while exploiting creation, imperiously excludes, enslaves, and even sacrifices humanity. It is a pervasive spirit of destructive self-interest, even greed – the worship of money, goods and possessions; the gospel of consumerism, proclaimed through powerful propaganda and religiously justified, believed and followed. It is the colonisation of consciousness, values and notions of human life by the imperial logic; a spirit lacking compassionate justice and showing contemptuous disregard for the gifts of creation and the household of life.

It is important that while the notion of empire¹⁴ is contextual¹⁵ and contested, it is a crucial part of the forming narrative of Christianity (Rieger, 2007:1). Although disputed, there are some historical marks that show the start of systematic economic, militarised and political domination of one society over others (Wink, 1992:39-46). I use the above definition, as it is a well-articulated definition considering some of the other work done in defining empire. A Western perspective can be found in the work of Brueggemann (2014:129-131), who places empire as a metanarrative in opposition to what he calls 'neighbourly love' (in the context of Marikana, neighbourly love might entail a company CEO seeking just living conditions for employees and not primarily the needs of shareholders). Brueggemann (2014:131) frames empire in three broad social power structures working for the amalgamation of aggressive predation. Brueggemann (2014:132) argues that empire is made of 1) an economy structured to resemble a pyramid which channels the flow of money to the centre of

14 The term 'empire' here is used as a theological term. It must be noted that within various contexts, other vocabularies have been used to give expression to the same notion. One example of this is in South Africa where Albert Nolan notes the use of the term 'system' (1988:69). Another term used is 'domination system' as presented by Walter Wink, specifically in his book *Engaging the Powers* (1992:13-107).

15 It is important to note Rieger's critique of contextual theology in which he argues that this form of theology aims to be relevant, but tends to "miss the gaps and silences in culture where the actual pain is" (2007:6-7). This chapter aims not to focus on the event of Marikana, but rather use this event as a lens to try and articulate deeper truths about church community. Moreover, this chapter tries to place focus not so much on the context of Marikana, but rather emphasise the social location of Mr. Noki and his colleagues to elicit critique of dominating power structures both within and outside of the ecclesial realm.

the empire;¹⁶ 2) Political monologue that silences all voices from below by co-opting social structures like media in order to sell its metanarrative; and 3) the existence of a religious society one dimensional in nature with no critical edge. Similarly, Joerg Rieger (2007:271-278) traces his understanding of empire also to economic power, but also includes cultural and political power as a means to gain influence over the other.¹⁷ Another example of framing empire is in the work done by Vuyani Vellem, who argues from the perspective of the Global South. Vellem contends that modernity is a project that stands in strong correlation with imperialism and colonialism and is therefore inherently anti-black. Vellem (2015) has a much more basic, but striking understanding of empire as an opaque life denying power that is built on racism and power which is a threat to life. Both arguments above as presented by Wink and Vellem are to some extent present in the above definition of empire as presented by the Accra working group. Thus, we can conclude that although there is no strict understanding of empire, we can ascertain that empire is a social power structure co-opting various structures in society such as economy, politics, race and even religion. The aim of empire is a structure existing solely for the gain of itself (and by implication the powerful elites in society) to the detriment of life and creation. The first to experience empire is therefore those exposed to its wrath, i.e. those without power. One can therefore argue that because of its aims of adding power to the powerful, empire creates structures that are violent to the dignity of those in which it preys.

Evaluating both the notions of structural violence and empire, I want to propose a framework for understanding the existence of the former as a direct result of the latter. Structural violence is the direct result of empire manifesting in different forms. Empire uses various forms of power to institutionalise the gathering of power. One of these powers are direct military power as used by colonial empires throughout the ages (Rieger, 2007:5). Most of these various power dynamics exist in significantly subtler and even invisible expressions of violence. One example of this kind of violence is, as Vellem notes, racism. It must be noted that these expressions of empire do not revolve around individuals or even modern forms of nation states. As Rieger (2007:1-2) points out, empire can no longer be equated to a nation state (although the United States might well qualify) but finds its roots in the vast global economy created by globalisation (Howard-Brook & Gwyther, 1999:236-242). This death-dealing reality is so saturated in the daily spheres of life that it is impossible for one human being to stop it (Rieger, 2007:2). This being said, care must be taken not to assign imperial power structures to an individual or a society; it must rather be understood as a tapestry of interwoven relationships existing between political, economic and societal structures. This tapestry is fuelled by the goal of gathering power and influence, to gather yet more power and influence.

16 For more on the economic side of empire and its connection with globalisation, see Sampie Terreblanche's (2009) chapter, 'The American Empire and the Entrenchment of Global Inequality,' in A.A. Boesak and L.D. Hansen (eds.) *Globalisation Vol 1: The politics of empire, justice and the life of faith*. African Sun Media, pp.31-47.

17 Rieger (2007:278) frames this in another way using the work of Meikens Wood (2005:47). Here Rieger explains the mechanism of empire is to economic hegemony without direct political domination.

Boesak (2009:59-63) argues that the time for avoiding imperial terminology is over, because of the rise of the American Empire and its military industrial complex. Boesak argues that the United States is becoming the first borderless nation with no limits to its political, economic and military power. This is a danger to life on earth, as for the first time in history, humanity has the ability to end all life as we know it. This is propelled, Boesak (2009:60) argues, by an unrestricted pursuit of consumerism, economic growth and political power, where human relations are secondary to economic prosperity. This seems evident in the example of Marikana where the profit motive seemed to silence the pleas of the workers. I want to contend that although the United States might be the head and heart of this new global empire, this empire is vastly more complex and far-reaching than most would admit. As mentioned above, the existence of multinational companies with more value than entire countries¹⁸ are one of these reasons. For example, in 2012, the financial institution and culprit in the global financial meltdown of 2008, Fannie Mae's revenue was more than the GDP of Peru. Serious study with regards to multinationals and their connection to structural violence is necessary, however this is not the place to do so. What should be evident is that the notion of empire in a modern world is argued here to be more than just the one-headed dragon of the American Empire and more a seven-headed dragon made up of complex political, economic and military relations of which the church is a part¹⁹ (Compier et al. 2007:1-3).

Because empire is a complex sociological phenomenon with vastly different contextual faces all revolving around the accumulation of power, another approach is necessary in order to understand and confront the structural violence in its wake. One such approach is to look at the consequences of structural violence through the eyes of those with the most intimate knowledge of its devastation.

Outlining his proposal of a theology of restitution, Tinyiko Maluleke (2008) argues for an approach to theology that always takes seriously the lived realities of those most vulnerable in society. He calls them the "un-people", those on who's back the powerful build the empire and who are in the first line of fire of structural violence. People who are unbanked, unemployed, unmedical-aided, unskilled, uneducated, unreached: the homeless, the illegal immigrants and the refugees or in the case of Marikana, the workers. Confronting the very nature of domesticated Western Christianity, he points to those around whom a theology of restitution (and by implication a theology of counter-empire) should be formed:

These people stand out like 'ugly warts and blots' in the 'enchanted' and 'smooth' narrative landscapes of 'glorious' stories of 'progress', 'reconciliation' and 'development' not only in our country but in many countries as well. They are the squatter camp dwellers who spoil the 'beauty' of the Cape Town landscape and its serene suburbia by installing their dirty, toilet-less, electricity-less and road-less ugly dwellings. These people remain disenchanting and dissatisfied despite living in

18 For a list, see Vincent Trivett. (2011). '25 US Mega corporations: Where they rank if they were countries.' Business Insider (online). Viewed from: <http://bit.ly/370tTtU> [Accessed 15 May 2018].

19 For a more in-depth discussion of the relationship between Christianity and Empire, see Rieger's work in Compier et al. (2007:1-13).

the 'greatest economic boom' South Africa has experienced ever. Discourses like they are the 'thankless' people who, primarily because of 'their own fault', have 'failed to grasp the opportunities' of our times are abundant. These are the people we would rather not see. Such people should hide themselves, or else we will find ways and means to keep them hidden²⁰ (Maluleke, 2008:689-690).

Nicholas Wolterstorff is another contemporary theologian who advocates for a theology from the perspective and placement of the marginalised in society. Wolterstorff's theory of justice starts not from the traditional philosophical frameworks, such as presented by John Rawls, who argues from an existential viewpoint (Botha & Forster, 2017). Rather, Wolterstorff (2013:7) starts with those on the under-side of history and power. Wolterstorff challenges the contemporary view of rights being bestowed onto people by law. Rather, he argues that humans are given fundamental rights at creation deriving from the reality of the *imago Dei*.

The resulting implications for a study on violence, at least from a theological perspective, are significant. From this perspective, humans cannot be given rights, but rather rights can only be acknowledged. Humanity and its structures therefore have no dominion over any human and attempts to do so, is violent to the very nature of what Christianity believes to be human. Wolterstorff (2013:22-32) therefore argues for understanding justice from the perspective of the marginalised²¹ to promote rights for those who cannot 'earn' rights as easily as those with social, political or economic power.

The belief of 'earned rights' as bestowed upon people by institutions or law has had devastating effects on people and society, specifically when combined with empire. The imperial power of the German Reich in the 1930's sought to bestow more rights on Aryan Germans than on Jews. This is a clear example of how empire translates power into structural violence, which disavows the very nature of human identity to which only God has sovereignty over. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, contesting the German Reich's publication of the *Law for the Restoration of the Professional Service of April 7 1933*, is deeply critical about this perspective (Green & Dejonge (eds.) 2013:370-378).

What one can draw from this perspective is that if the existence of empire is such that power and its manifestations in political, economic and military forms, are gathered for the sake of power. A just society in contrast, is vastly different. Wolterstorff's notion of a just society is one reliant on the dignity of another and therefore beyond self-gain. Empire is to dominate the other as well as creation whereas a just society is to be in just relation to other. In a context of structural violence, what then might the contours be of ecclesial counter-narrative be when the church itself struggles with detachment from empire?

20 One might even add that we drive by these human beings with such detachment that we do not even acknowledge their existence.

21 Elsewhere Wolterstorff traces the theological orientation of justice starting from the marginalised back to the Old Testament. Here marginalised is understood as the most vulnerable in society and named as the 'widow, the fatherless and the stranger' (2013:69-78). It is of interest to note that Mgecineni Noki was an orphan. His father died at the Impala mine before his birth and his mother was murdered whilst he was a young boy ("Under the green blanket", 2013).

MISSION AGAINST STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE

When discussing the *missio Dei* the reality to which the church is called, is the reality of the emerging Kingdom of God (Bosch, 2011:71-74). As discussed above, this notion of God's reign or Kingdom is inherently in contrast to the notion of empire.²² Mission therefore chooses sides by standing against all powers that aim to dominate humanity which is not from God. Botha (2015:19-21) argues that this implies mission being done by a church standing in solidarity with 'the other' rather than those with access to power and privilege.²³ Emmanuel Katongole, however, argues that the church is also not immune to the pursuit of power. He argues that Christian social ethics in Africa demand that the church (which is also in pursuit of power, domination and invincibility) take a very different view of power in order to guard against the further entrenchment of violence (2011:131).

The church's public missional calling to combat empire is in its identity to harbour vulnerability and neighbourliness (Brueggemann, 2014:143-156). As was shown, the existence of both empire and structural violence is dependent on power. Arguing for a completely powerless society would be naïve and unwise; however, the form of power and, more importantly, its influence on relations, particularly toward the most vulnerable, are questioned. Brueggemann (2010:62-63) argues for a subversion of imperial power in the Old Testament by way of three theological concepts: steadfast love,²⁴ justice,²⁵ and righteousness.²⁶ These concepts, it seems, are inherently anti-empire because they aim to distribute access and power, rather than to hoard access and power. Furthermore, these active verbs ask of any citizen to pursue a life of meaning beyond the self and for the goodness of God's creation. Therefore, the notion of neighbourliness does not negate power, nor does it abandon power, but sees power merely as a tool to establish just harmony within community. One such power that the church has used in order to gain power rather than to establish a peaceable and harmonious world, is the mission of the church, which must be acknowledged. However, the obvious connection between colonialism and Christian mission²⁷ shows that even the Gospel can be manipulated to serve the

22 See also Brueggemann. (2010), *Journey to the Common Good*, pp.1-35

23 Botha's argument is based on the work of David Bosch in *Transforming Mission* (2011:463-464) where Bosch argues for mission being 'convivencia' or 'life together'.

24 The term *hesed* is defined by Brueggemann as "to stand in solidarity, to honor commitments, and to be reliable towards all partners" (2010:62).

25 The term *mišpat* is defined by Brueggemann as "distribution in order to make sure that all members of the community have access to resources and goods for the sake of a viable life of dignity" (2010:62).

26 The term *sedaqah* is defined by Brueggemann as "active intervention in social affairs, taking an initiative to intervene effectively in order to rehabilitate society and to correct every humanity-diminishing activity" (2010:63).

27 Willie Jennings illuminates the connections between Christianity, colonialism and power when he points out the effects of power on colonial Christians. Jennings points out that the notion of Christian hospitality (or neighbourliness) was inverted by colonial Christians when these missionaries claimed the identity of host within foreign land and then imprinting foreign cultural and ethical paradigms upon native peoples (2010:8-9).

interests of empire. Brueggemann (2014:15-23) traces phenomena of Judeo-Christian religion and its relationship with power seeking ideology right back to the prophetic traditions of the seventh century B.CE Brueggemann argues that during this time period, religious tradition was transported to the urban centres in order to serve the goals of elites.

The issue here is not to promote the *missio Dei*²⁸ as a direct action against empire therefore placing the sole mandate of the church likened to some resistance movement. The truth is far more confronting. The mission of the church is understood to partake in the *missio Dei*, therefore being in relational co-creation of the emerging resurrected reality in which we believe and confess. This places the focus on God and not empire, on God and not the acts of humans. Missional theology acting out of worship of God (and therefore not of human enterprise) it is argued, is much more dangerous to empire than reaction against structures of violence. This is not because church should react in times of crises, but because reaction implies waiting for human lives or creation to be violated. Whereas missional theology acting out of worship of Christ as *Kyrios* and not Empire, is inherently connected to the marginalised and rooted in justice²⁹ (Bosch, 2011:76). Mission, therefore, is not only an evangelising action where 'those out there' are helped out of oppression and converted. Mission is also a spiritually rooted counter-narrative exposing Empire and its structural violence by living an emergent reality of resurrection.³⁰ Yet as mentioned, this can only be done when in relational proximity to those experiencing structural violence.

Considering that the church operates within empire and that the church is susceptible to the lure of imperial theology (Rieger, 2007:5-9), careful reflection needs to be taken to ask how to faithfully, ethically and prophetically be part of the *missio Dei*. Some contours to guide the discernment of the church might be caught up in the following clues:

a) Relational solidarity

Brueggemann (2014:142-150) gives some guidance to the identity of the ecclesial community within a world of imperial violence. One striking argument Brueggemann makes, where he argues that resistance to the meta-narrative of empire starts from 'below', resonates with the work of Joerg Rieger and Wolterstorff:

This alternative narrative is characteristically told and enacted 'from below'. It arises from a bodily reality of suffering and exploitation. It is manifested in nonconformist conduct, and it is geared to specific human reality on the ground among those who have found the large universalising claims of the imperial narrative false, toxic and lethal (Brueggemann, 2014:143).

28 One must also acknowledge that the *missio Dei* itself was and still is coerced into forming part of the power of the church which aims to dominate. Thus, one might be wise to consider Katongole's statement above as a warning to the church not to claim its mission mandate so easily as has been the case in many Western churches.

29 Here one can add steadfast love and righteousness, as argued by Brueggemann above.

30 See also L. Newbigin. (2015). *The Open Secret: An Introduction to the Theology of Mission*. Revised Edition. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, pp.92-95.

Brueggemann argues the essence of Christian action amid imperial reality and structural violence starts with those experiencing the violence of this empire. Crucially, Brueggemann notes the core of what Wolterstorff also argues to be the starting point of a just society: being in relational proximity to those suffering. This results in a challenge to the church first and foremost to be aware of the nature of structural violence, its mechanics and the names of those it violates. Mission against structural violence then implies experiencing the effects thereof in the lived realities of the black and poor bodies that are systemic targets of empire and having the lived reality inform missiology. Koopman (in Smith, Ackah, Reddie & Tshaka, 2015:217-223) argues for a theology of hybridity which aims to challenge certainties and essentialisms regarding human identity. This, according to Koopman, requires the acknowledgement of complexity and ambiguity within proximity, with the aim to acknowledge fragments of 'the other' in the self.

Furthermore, it is the relational solidarity with the marginalised that enables prophetic action. As Brueggemann notes, the prophetic counterculture of the seventh century was rooted in reality. By reality Brueggemann means the reality of the kingship of YHWH as well as the reality of the poor working class, and not the imperial reality as perpetuated by those seeking to increase their social, political or economic stance (even if on paper the wealthy belong to the Jewish same religion). This act of relational solidarity from the bottom up does not have the inherent intent of dismantling self-serving power structures. Relational solidarity is rather in itself the ethical confession of a Christianity which understands the *missio Dei* as an act, not because of the socio-political context of the world, but of who the triune God is. Newbigin (1995:59) notes a different but related angle on mission. He states that this mission that the church is called to participate in, not only convicts the world, but also brings the church to conversion. This conversion then, for the church, is one turning ever more toward God and then inherently toward the least of these.

Tracing this argument to the Marikana context, many are aware of the religious devotion of South Africa's political elite, which has been well documented. Yet if the abovementioned is to be taken seriously, critical questions must be asked of the spheres of politics, private business and church and what truly lies in the spirit of these communities. These questions in the context of Marikana are born therefore, not primarily out of moral ideology, but rather out of lived reality.

To summarise: the challenge put forth by the prophetic traditions throughout history is whether society has a relational posture living out of solidarity with the widow, the orphan and the foreigner. These challenges are at the core of a missiology which operates not to colonise the other for the expansion of Christian religion, but rather to saturate humanity with real reality as the peaceable Kingdom of God. This is important because relational solidarity with the most vulnerable exposes the eschatological truth to which the church holds.

b) Confession

A second tool for guidance in the church as mission operating in a reality of empire and violence is the notion of Christian confession.

When writing about structural violence because of empire, care must be taken not to view the church as an entity functioning in a vacuum, not implicated by imperial theology.³¹ This is evident in how theology and the church have been co-opted by empire to form colonial narratives with enormous structural violence, where the distinction between Mission and colonialism was, at various times, vague to say the least (Bosch, 2011:309-310). Some notion of this can be found in Hannah Arendt's (1963:298) idea of "the banality of evil". Care must be taken not to create a false equivalency between different historical events, yet Arendt's contribution shines a light on a deep human truth. It is mostly ordinary people who are coerced into evil structures that deny life even without being able to recognise their participation. Mission and the ecclesial calling to be sent has been, and still is, susceptible to the lure of imperial power. Rieger (1998:21) argues what he calls 'Liberal Theology' is a strand of theology which tends to promote and support the politically and socially powerful. This has made the church an entity also guilty of structural violence (Rieger, 2007:10-13). This is evident in the South African narrative where the state and church³² promoted imperial theology for the benefit of a few white people (De Gruchy, 1982:69-85). Life of this facade of empire has the tendency to isolate persons from those who suffer precisely because of the effects of power.

Roberts (1989:90) correctly points out the difficulty in dismantling structural and cultural violence, as groups with power do not voluntarily relinquish their power, especially when they are co-opted. This is even more challenging when taking note of the realities of consumerism in the modern world. James Smith (2009:93-101) gives an insightful and challenging contribution by showing how consumerism is a sociological phenomenon creating a desire within humanity which is destructive to life. Therefore, care must be taken as phenomena such as consumerism are violent to this identity of the church and a means to be co-opted into imperial theology that can easily evolve into structural violence.

Theologically speaking, the church is understood as the entity with the calling of participation in the eschatological imminence of reality with a clear focus on the *missio Dei*, and not the *missio hominis*. Sociologically however, the church, just as any

31 Willie Jennings does well in his book *The Christian Imagination: Theology and the origins of race* to describe the complexities of white missionaries and their role in supporting Western white supremacy among Africans, specifically in South Africa. Jennings describes these events as having something to do with a lack of 'theological vision' thereby being caught up in the narrative of colonial powers (2010:199-132).

32 As argued, this imperial ethics of power is present in structures such as those present at the Marikana tragedy. Forster (2016:68-69) has even warned that some of South Africa's past experiences with church and state might be returning. He notes the current political complexities within the Methodist Church in Southern Africa and its relationship with the ANC particularly noting the actions of reverend Vukile Mehana as being very dangerous in the context of the powers linking church and state.

other structure, is very susceptible to the lure of the empire. This is especially true in a world where consumerism can easily be linked to imperial ideologies violent toward life in an unseen manner. Metzger (2007:45-48) does well to link the existence of consumerism to a narrative which divides and destroys human dignity by selling a message of worth as needing to be bestowed and not as inherent.

Therefore, confession firstly is of our complicity in empire and structural violence, even if it is not active participation. The global reality of empire, as mentioned above, makes life without empire extremely difficult and the denial of this adds to structural violence.

Secondly, confession is also centred around Christ as Lord. The notion of a confessing church is picked up by Hauerwas and Williamson (1989:44-46) who makes a distinction between an 'activist church' (which is mentioned above as a church reacting to context) and a confessing church. Confessing church firstly calls people to conversion linking to the above understanding of confession of being culpable. Thirdly, to be a visible church, meaning being present in body and spirit, for example at the events of Marikana, which is also linked to notions of Public Theology. Hauerwas and Williamson (1989:46-47) notes that church "has no interest in withdrawing from the world, but it is also not surprised when its witness evokes hostility from the world." Confessing church, lastly, is a cross-centred society, which does not allow for compromise, but continually pursues to enact the peaceful victory of Christ over the powers of empire (1989:46-47).

The lesson from the confessing church is that confession of culpability is necessary in the journey of healing and liberation from partaking in structural violence. This is a journey and one which does not come without sacrifice. Yet in the process of healing and liberation, action which speaks of Christ as Lord is possible. One such example is given by Botha and Forster (2017) which speaks of the 'public confession' given by Beyers Naudé against a company very active in structural violence. Although we do not know what words were spoken, this can be interpreted as an embodied confession of Christ as Lord. Naudé in a prophetic act confronted Dutch Royal Shell and told the company to remove itself from South Africa as it was supporting state sponsored apartheid. Another example is Union Theological Seminary, which in 2014 divested all its endowment from fossil fuels therefore acting against structural violence impacting creation.³³ This divestment is a prophetic action in a reality of globalisation where return on investment trumps justice. The challenge to post-1994 church communities is not only socio-political in nature, but also personal. What is the stance of the church in a country which seems to be on its way to elect a president who himself was directly involved in the death of Mr. Noki? How do we deal with our own complacency in empire? How do we account not only for our actions within a reality of empire, but our inactions in times of violence especially violence towards the widows, foreigners and the fatherless? These are questions of confession.

33 The full statement on the divestment can be found here: Time. (2014). 'Union becomes the world's first seminary to divest from fossil fuels,' June 10, Time [Online]. Viewed from <http://time.com/2853203/union-fossil-fuels/> [Accessed 12 May 2018]

CONCLUSION

The industrialised era has given rise to vast improvements in human life and complemented the pursuit of dignity for all life. Yet realities of structural violence remain present because of empire. The *missio Dei* challenges the church as custodians and participants in a new reality to act out of this missional calling to become aware and confront life denying structures which are violent to creation in unseen ways. This chapter argued that violence is a consequence of empire and that the church has an active mission to resist this reality. One way to do so is by acting out of relational solidarity with those such as Mr. Noki. This, however, can only be done with integrity when our own shortcomings are confessed together with the hopeful confession of Christ as true Lord.

In some way, it is telling to know that after the Marikana massacre, Mr. Noki's widow received a house with a flush toilet and a septic tank. Plans are also in place to build houses for each of the 34 mineworkers' families who died at Marikana. These houses are not built by Lonmin who are guilty of primary violence, nor by the police who pulled the triggers, nor by the church which has the mission toward protecting widows. It was built by a trust set up by the workers union AMCU (Sunday Times, 26 June 2017). Although Lonmin did not supply the housing, the events of Marikana did change circumstances for workers. Minimum salary per worker is as of 2017, R10 000 p.m., excluding benefits, and the company pledged to build adequate housing for workers over a period of time. A memorial park is also in progress to be built (Omarjee, 2017). This seemingly hopeful ending asks whether a just and peaceable dignified world can emerge without tragedy. It might seem that change comes more quickly through trauma than through human conversion towards justice. This, however, is as Wink (1992:13-17) puts it, "the myth of redemptive violence". The more confronting and challenging truth is that this change is precisely the eschatological mission to which the church is called.

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